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INDONESIA

TSUNAMI RESPONSE

Cash-for-Work Programs Provide Jobs and Hope

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Ainul Mardiah lost her home, two older sisters, a nephew and a niece to the earthquake. She joined a cash-for-work crew of 200 people to clean up what used to be the village of Miruk Lamreudup in Aceh Besar. She earns enough to pay for her daily needs. "I really enjoy working here because I'm with friends," she says, "...instead of just thinking about the water on that day." Ainul is one of 15,000 people employed by USAID in cash-for-work programs that will benefit 75,000 people in Aceh province.

*Photo: Debbie Tomasowa,
Mercy Corps Indonesia*

AINUL'S STORY

The bright and colorful loosely fitting clothes on her body do not seem to restrict Ainul Mardiah from moving around scooping dirt and other trash off the ground. She is a 50 year-old single woman from the village of Miruk Lamreudeup in the Aceh Besar area. She joined 200 men and women in one of USAID's cash-for-work programs to clean up the village, which was devastated by the December 2004 earthquake and tsunami.

"I lost my two elder sisters, one nephew and one niece..." she said sorrowfully. "I lost everything in the earthquake as well, including my house in this area." Then, she suddenly smiled and bashfully pointed to her bright colored shirt, saying that the clothes she wears are not even hers.

"You see this?" She pulled part of her skirt up enthusiastically to reveal a long dry scar on her leg. "...this is because I fell when I lost grip when we were running with many people to catch the truck," she said. "My left shoulder also still hurts..." Ainul explained that she tried to escape the waves by catching a ride on a passing truck already filled with people. "People were running all over the place... in many different directions! It was so confusing."

It was Ainul's third day cleaning the site of what used to be part of Miruk Lamreudup. Frequent chatter and laughter are commonly heard at the site these days. "I really enjoy working here because I'm here with friends," Ainul said. "It's refreshing! Instead of just thinking about the water on that day..." She admitted she is tired, but she is happy to be able to work again.

"What I earn here is not too much, but it's good enough for now," Ainul explained with a smile. Her salary covers her daily needs. The program in Miruk Lamreudup is carried out by Mercy Corps. USAID employs 15,000 people in Aceh province in cash-for-work programs that will benefit 75,000 people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on USAID's work to help communities devastated by the tsunami, see "Tsunami Relief" at www.usaid.gov.